


Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Enclosure 7b
June 7, 2012

TO: Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 

RE: **Renewal of the New England Laborer's/Cranston Public Schools Career and Construction Academy Charter School by the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education**

DATE: June 7, 2012

The charter of the New England Laborer's/Cranston Public Schools Career and Construction Academy Charter School (NEL/CPS) expires at the conclusion of the 2011-12 school year. In accordance with the Board of Regents' Regulations Governing Public Charter Schools C-4-3, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) coordinated the process of evaluating New England Laborer's/Cranston Public Schools Career and Construction Academy Charter School's performance over the past five years to determine the merits of charter renewal.

Review Process

- Over the past two years, RIDE's Office of Transformation has developed a rigorous evaluation of charter school performance, guided by three questions:
 - Is the school's educational program an academic success?
 - Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for academic success?
 - Is the school a viable organization?

NEL/CPS went through a targeted version of the full review, given that the review process was not complete at the time of analysis.

The first portion of the review – is the school's educational program an academic success? – was designed to consider all relevant student outcome measures, including Math and ELA NECAP performance, IDEA SPP indicators, graduation rates, federal Adequate Yearly Progress designations, and, if applicable, ACCESS proficiency and graduation rates.

The second portion of the review – is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success? – was designed to gauge the quality of instructional leadership, instruction, and curriculum (math and ELA only) at each school relative to the standards set forth in the Board of Regent’s Basic Education Program. Evidence for this portion of the review was gathered through a two-day site visit and, where applicable, the findings of 2010 Commissioner’s Review Process.

The third portion of the review – is the school a viable organization? – was designed to consider whether or not schools are using public funds responsibly and appropriately. RIDE staff reviewed each school’s financial audits over the course of the charter term as all other relevant documentation on the school’s compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

- The school was required to complete a renewal application. This application provides an opportunity for the school: (1) to present any important new or supplemental information pertaining to the above guiding questions, to enable a more comprehensive assessment of school performance; and (2) to articulate the school’s strategies and capacities for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term.

Key Findings

- NEL/CPS’s educational program is not an academic success. As measured by NECAP, the school’s ELA and Math programs have significantly underperformed the school’s sending districts in every year that data is available. With the exception of the 2009-2010 teaching year, the school’s Math and ELA NECAP performance has also lagged significantly behind similar schools [See Attachment 1]. Since 2007-2008, the school has been classified “Insufficient Progress” for failing to meet AYP requirements. It has missed multiple AYP targets for test participation, graduation rate, and NECAP proficiency.
- NEL/CPS is not providing many of the appropriate conditions for academic success. Our review indicates that the school does not have many of the internal systems and structures to measurably improve achievement of its students:
 - Overall, the school’s administrative and board leadership for student learning and continuous improvement over the life of the school’s latest charter term does not meet the standards as defined by the student academic goals in the Charter Performance Review Handbook. However, the school recently hired a new Executive Director to lead the school and has developed a new school improvement plan to improve student achievement.

- At the time of the school's renewal site visit, NEL/CPS did not have complete ELA or math curricula that were aligned to Rhode Island State Standards.
- At this time, we are not able to make a comprehensive assessment of NEL/CPS's organization viability:
 - The school is materially compliant with applicable statutory and regulatory obligations for which there was evidence. NEL/CPS's does not have separate year-end audited financial statements for any years in the most recent charter term. All financial information is aggregated into Cranston Public School financial statements, as well as City of Cranston financial statements. Moving forward, the charter school's financial statements will be independently audited separate from Cranston Public Schools.

In addition to the information gathered through the RIDE review and approval process, and at the request of the Board of Regents, RIDE staff sought additional information about NEL/CPS student application and enrollment practices and Alternative Education Program, an education program housed at NEL/CPS. At the conclusion of this information gathering process, RIDE determined that:

- NEL/CPS has been employing a non-compliant application and enrollment process that directly enrolls Cranston East and Cranston West students in the AEP. Those students have, to date, been treated as NEL/CPS Charter School students; and
- Students enrolled in the AEP do not receive the curriculum or instructional program described within Regents-approved NEL/CPS charter application.

THEREFORE, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education renew the charter of NEL/CPS for a three (3) year term, to operate in accordance with the attached renewed Charter from the 2012-2013 school year to the 2014-2015 school year. This approval is conditioned on the NEL/CPS charter school submission of evidence of meeting the following conditions no later than July 30, 2012:

1. Establish a student application and enrollment process that is compliant with state and federal regulations. All students enrolled or seeking enrollment in the NEL/CPS charter school must complete the revised and RIDE-approved charter application and enrollment process. And,
2. All enrolled students must be receiving or scheduled to receive the full breadth of instructional programming described in the approved NEL/CPS charter application.

To be eligible for future charter renewal, the school must demonstrate overall success by:

- attaining student achievement goals as defined in the Charter Performance Review Handbook. And,
- implementing standards-based curricula that meet the requirements of the Board of Regent's Basic Education Program Regulations G-13-1. And,
- demonstrating the management and leadership necessary to establish a thriving, financially viable charter public school as defined by the organizational performance goals in the Charter Performance Review Handbook. And,
- ensuring that all operational elements of the school meet statutory and regulatory guidelines.

#

Attachment 1

Student Performance Relative to Sending District and Similar Schools

NEL/CPS						
		2006-2007 TcY	2007-2008 TcY	2008-2009 TcY	2009-2010 TcY	2010-2011 TcY
Proficiency Level	Reading	N/A	23.50%	58.70%	57%	58%
	Math	N/A	2.90%	2.20%	4%	5%
1.1 Sending District	Reading	N/A	Below Typical	Below Typical	Below Typical	Below Typical
	Math	N/A	Below Typical	Below Typical	Below Typical	Below Typical
1.2 Similar Schools	Reading	N/A	Typical	Below Typical	Typical	Below Typical
	Math	N/A	Below Typical	Below Typical	Typical	Below Typical
1.5 AYP		N/A	Insufficient Progress	Insufficient Progress	Insufficient Progress	Insufficient Progress